

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

**Quitting smoking: "I did a day at a time."**



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"Monica" tried to quit cigarettes and she relapsed twice. Each time, she learned something new about her addiction. (This story is based on the experiences of real people whose names have been changed.)



My first time, I quit cigarettes for only two days. I was sure I could do it on my own. I was at the bar when I relapsed. I was used to having a cigarette with a beer. I thought, "Wow, a cigarette would be great right now. Just one last smoke with this beer." But I didn't have just one cigarette. I wound up buying a whole pack, and by the end of the evening I had smoked half of them.

I was embarrassed the next day when I talked to my counselor from the tobacco quitline. But she told me it's really common for people to slip up. The important thing is to try again. She told me to think back to what started me craving a cigarette. I realized that tasting the beer and smelling the smoke from the crowd at the bar automatically made me remember good feelings about smoking.

So I decided to stay out of bars that allowed smoking.

It was a week until my next relapse. I was out at lunch with friends, and feeling tense about an assignment at work. Someone offered me a cigarette. I wasn't really thinking, and I lit up. After a few drags, I said to myself, "What are you doing?" and put the cigarette out.

I tried again, and this time I talked to my doctor about medicines that could help. I also kept a list in my pocket with the reasons I was quitting smoking, and I put together a "quit kit" in my purse. A rubber ball to squeeze if I got tense. Gum to keep my mouth busy. My cell phone with my quit buddy's telephone number on speed dial. Sometimes I talk to her for a few minutes and it gets my mind off the cravings.

For a while, each day was a challenge. But I do a day at a time. It's been 279 days now...and counting.

**Learn more:** Why did Monica work so hard to quit smoking? Read about the harmful [effects of smoking](#).

Read more about [how Monica decided to quit tobacco](#).